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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Jamaica at the Crossroads

Jamaica's effort to fulfill the requirements and aspirations of independence without drastically altering its colonial political system and social structure has begun to take a turn that could have tragic consequences. After 14 years of independence, two basic forces are in contention. On one side are the pressures for orthodoxy imposed by the fragility of the island's economy and by the political preferences of a privileged establishment. On the other is the pressure for drastic over-haul that emanates from the worsening plight of the peasant and from the energetic persuasions of a radicalized young urban generation. The balance between these conflicting but long-stalemated interests now is shifting in favor of the more dynamic second force.

Jamaica's burden of third-world problems is pushing it toward third-world formulas for solution. Prime Minister Manley, who detects disaster ahead if the island maintains its present direction, sees possible solution only in risking the uncertainties of an untried course. Manley's deep understanding of Jamaica, his appreciation for the impact of outside influences on his country, and his familiarity, after four years of leadership, with the limits and potentialities of his levers of power give him confidence in his own political instincts.

His assessment in general terms is fairly clear. He believes Jamaica's system as it stands cannot serve the interests of most islanders. The strongest evidence of its failure is in the attitudes of the new generation: the intelligent, educated young people are typically revolutionary radicals; many of the less fortunate, jobless and hopeless, expend their energies in criminal and violent action.

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Manley's vision of how to respond to the exigencies he identifies is also generally clear. He will explore the range of models available in the third world, evaluate their applicability to the local scene, and introduce specific elements of them as circumstances permit. At the same time, he will do what he can to create a hospitable climate for his experiment.

With this goal in mind, he probably considers that the time has come to determine the limits of his maneuverability. He will test and probe to find the source and strength of opposition. He will want to see, too, what minimum pace will suffice to keep his radical advisors on his side.

Manley has adopted tactics that he hopes will have a double payoff. In dealing with the middle class, he seems to accept their alienation as a necessary cost but one that he hopes to minimize. While he encourages the most disaffected to leave the island, thus removing a potential source of opposition, he is sufficiently responsive to middle-class concerns to prevent the kind of stampede that would do intolerable damage to his and Jamaica's image. The first approach builds his credibility with his radical associates; the second demonstrates the wisdom of slowing the revolutionary process as conditions dictate.

He is also concentrating on consolidating his personal power, and herein lies the fatal flaw in his vision. Manley will whittle away at his opposition and probably can manage, over time, to ensure that his party monopolizes the political process. He envisions Jamaica's future with himself at its center. His radical supporters, though, are looking beyond Manley, and their "new Jamaica" is likely to be a grotesque version of his.

"Democratic socialism" offers Manley the key to fulfilling his obligation to build on his father's legacy. The concept honors the senior Manley's democratic principles and adds the new dimension required by the new generation. Manley's model melds what he sees as the best in both the democratic and authoritarian

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political forms. It also suits his style, which combines a love for political rough and tumble with a paternalistic political morality. Offended by the predatory, exploitive flaw he discerns in both communism and capitalism, Manley is attracted to the inventive correctives sought by the third world.

Both domestic and external circumstances tell Manley that the moment is ripe for political audacity. He believes conditions on the island are becoming intolerable, that Jamaica is a tinderbox ready to explode into total violence unless there is some visible, credible effort to remedy social and economic discrepancies. Despite his past failures, his charisma is untarnished and re-election--with the opposition fragmented and intimidated--is a near certainty.

In the world outside his island, he sees the growing solidarity among the less developed countries as providing a salubrious climate for independent behavior by a small nation. He is inspired by the example of new societies around the world, especially nearby Cuba, and sees little likelihood of damaging reaction from US investors if he tries to emulate them.

US policy toward Jamaica is a significant ingredient in the mix of factors that will shape the island's future. Like other entities in the Caribbean, it cannot sustain its current level of development, much less improve, on its own. Over the long term, Manley believes that dependency might be eliminated by the wealth-sharing envisioned under the "new international economic order." But for now, the island's advancement is tied to help from outside.

The lack of attention perceived from the US is a source of despair to Manley's opposition and the growing ranks of defectors from his cause. US assistance, they think, would ameliorate Jamaica's bleak economic situation, reduce the social tension, and sweeten the island's prospects under a moderately nationalistic but pro-Western government. They fear that US indifference will enhance the young radicals'

ability to influence Manley and hasten the corruption of parliamentary democracy. Many middle-class Jamaicans have already decided that Manley's infatuation with Castro, his affection for the young rabble-rousing Jamaicans, and his attacks on capitalism make the left-word drift irreversible. They are abandoning the island.

For Manley, the US is a weakened giant that will not help but can still cause harm. The island's dependence on income from mainland tourists and US aluminum companies makes it essential for Manley to avoid outraging the Americans. Not sharing the unalterable enmity his youthful advisers feel toward the US, moreover, his mind is not closed to a productive alliance with Washington. But he sees such an alliance as out of the question with the current administration, which he stereotypes as hostile toward the third world. Until he detects a turnaround in Washington's attitude, he will postulate Jamaica's final independence on gradual disengagement from the US.

Beyond this formidable economic restraint on the speed with which he replaces capitalism with socialism, there is little to impede Manley. His adversaries have little to use against him except rhetoric, which cannot match his own. If they resort to violence they will provide him the excuse to use the security forces against them, to call for martial law, or to unleash the self-defense force that he has created within the party. In the streets, his support from the left gives him access to the slum gangs and party militants responsive to his radical housing minister, Anthony Spaulding. As long as Manley moves within constitutional bounds, he has nothing to fear from the apolitical Jamaican army.

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Manley seems likely to continue on his leftward course, pausing only to withdraw or water down proposals that create more tension than he wants. Over the next year or so, the situation in Jamaica will probably remain much as it is today with continuing political conflict and violence, and with Manley winning a little

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more authority in each round. The game will be election politics until the voting delivers to Manley the people's stamp of approval on his blueprint for a new Jamaica.

Manley's relatively practical approach to bilateral affairs with the US suggests that he recognizes the limits of Jamaica's possibilities. At the moment he remains at liberty to balance a radical foreign policy against a contrasting moderation in matters that directly affect the island. If he currently inclines toward his tough-minded advisers, he nevertheless remains unindebted to them while they continue dependent on him. His imperious confidence that he knows what is best for Jamaica and his growing impatience with the frustrations of a parliamentary system, however, imply a vulnerability to radical exhortation.

Unless the radical elements burn themselves by pushing Manley too hard or abusing what license he grants them, they will remain the obvious heirs to his power monopoly. As his more sober advisers leave him or trim their sails to the prevailing winds, Manley seems likely to become increasingly isolated with and impressed by the blandishments of the young revolutionaries. Their ideas about cutting the imperialist knots will be less modest than his.

They will want a more intensive policy on the Jamaicanization of industry, at a minimum. They probably will speak against the wide range of cultural and economic intrusions from the US, whose media, information, entertainment, and lifestyle pervade the island and whose citizens own a substantial amount of property there. The radical political formulas that would result would almost surely deny Jamaica access to aid, investment, or support from the US, Western Europe, or Japan, or any "capitalist" source.

Manley already has the support and sympathy of Cuba, but how far he would wish to or could parley that affinity into a real subsidy from the communist world would depend on a host of variables. The most commanding questions are whether the Soviets would have any interest in bearing the cost, directly or through their Cuban surrogates, of another socialist "victory"

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in the US domain; and whether Manley could be converted or forced by desperation to pay the political price of such support.

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